

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 083702

FOLLOWING REPEAT KINSHASA 3463 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BRUSSELS
PARIS LISBON LUSAKA MOSCOW KIGALI USUN NEW YORK SECDEF
DIA USIA NATO LUBUMBASHI 13 APR 77

QUOTE

S E C R E T KINSHASA 3463

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOS, PINS, AEMR, CG, AO
SUBJ: SHABA INVASION: GENERAL ASSESSMENT (APRIL 13)

1. SUMMARY. THE PAST WEEK SAW MOBUTU'S EFFORTS TO ENLIST INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE BEAR FRUIT AS MOROCCAN TROOPS AND FRENCH ADVISERS RUSHED TO ZAIRE'S AID. MOBUTU ALSO DEMONSTRATED HIS POLITICAL CONTROL, IF NOT POPULARITY, BY INDUCING CROWDS TO TURN OUT FOR A RALLY OF SUPPORT. THUS ENCOURAGED, HE IS LIKELY TO TRY TO CRUSH THE INVADERS RATHER THAN PURSUE NEGOTIATIONS, WITH THE CONSEQUENT RISK OF ESCALATING THE CONFLICT. END SUMMARY.

2. MOBUTU HAS CONSISTENTLY SOUGHT TO PORTRAY THE KATANGAN INVADERS AS TOOLS OF SOVIET-CUBAN IMPERIALISM, THEREBY

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JUSTIFYING HIS APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM HIS WESTERN FRIENDS AS WELL AS HIS DISINCLINATION TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT THROUGH NEGOTIATION RATHER THAN FORCE. IN HIS STADIUM SPEECH APRIL 9 MOBUTU HAMMERED AWAY AT THE THEMES THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN ZAIRE'S ENEMY SINCE 1960, THAT CUBA AND ANGOLA ARE SIMPLE SOVIET PAWNS, AND THAT "WE WILL CONQUER."

3. MOBUTU WAS OBVIOUSLY ENCOURAGED BY THE LARGE TURN-OUT FOR THE RALLY AND BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST MOROCCAN TROOPS. BOTH THESE ELEMENTS, HOWEVER, UNDERLINE THE WEAKNESS OF HIS REGIME'S PRINCIPAL INSTITUTIONS, THE PARTY (MPR) AND THE MILITARY (FAZ: MOBUTU'S RELIANCE ON EMPLOYERS AND THE NATIONAL LABOR UNION TO ORGANIZE THE RALLY SERVED TO EMPHASIZE THE FAILURE OF THE MPR'S EFFORT THE PREVIOUS SUNDAY; AND HIS RELIANCE ON FOREIGN TROOPS CONSTITUTES AN ADMISSION OF FAZ INCOMPETENCE, HOWEVER STRENUOUSLY DENIED. NEVERTHELESS, THE SUCCESSFUL RALLY AND THE EVIDENCE OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT HAVE COMBINED TO CHALLENGE, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, THE INCREASINGLY WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION THAT MOBUTU IS NO LONGER IN CONTROL OF EVENTS. MOBUTU'S RENEWED CONFIDENCE IS REFLECTED IN HIS MORE RELAXED HANDLING OF THE FOREIGN PRESS AND IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ANOTHER RALLY WILL BE ORGANIZED APRIL 20 FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH. HAVING DEMONSTRATED HIS CONTROL OF EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS, MOBUTU APPARENTLY NOW INTENDS TO SHOW THAT HE CAN SUCCESSFULLY DEMAND A SIMILAR DISPLAY OF ALLEGIANCE FROM OFTEN-FRACTIOUS STUDENTS.

4. THE ARRIVAL OF THE MOROCCANS SHOULD SERVE TO RELIEVE THE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO KOLWEZI AND STABILIZE THE MILITARY SITUATION, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN, AND CONSEQUENTLY BUY TIME FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

NEITHER SIDE, HOWEVER, CURRENTLY APPEARS PERSUADED THAT THE DISPUTE CANNOT BE RESOLVED BY FORCE ALONE. WE EXPECT MOBUTU TO DEFER NEGOTIATIONS AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER HE HAS LAUNCHED A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE. MOBUTU HOPES TO PUSH THE KATANGANS BACK ACROSS THE ANGOLAN BORDER, SECURE IT WITH AN INTERNATIONAL SECRET

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POLICE FORCE, AND ONLY THEN SIT DOWN WITH NETO FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FULL RANGE OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN ZAIRE AND ANGOLA. IT IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THAT MOBUTU'S FOREIGN TROOPS WILL NOT ENJOY GREATER SUCCESS THAN NETO'S IN ATTEMPTING TO EXPEL THEIR ADVERSARIES. IF THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IS UNSUCCESSFUL, MOBUTU AGAIN WILL BE FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN NEGOTIATIONS OR FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE CONFLICT. HIS SUCCESS THUS FAR WITH THE LATTER STRATEGY WILL PROBABLY ENCOURAGE HIM TO CONTINUE, WITH THE INHERENT DANGER OF PROVOKING ESCALATION FROM ANGOLA. IN THE MEANTIME, HE REMAINS UNHAPPY WITH THE LACK OF US POLITICAL AND MATERIAL RESPONSE AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO TRY TO DEMONSTRATE ANGOLAN/CUBAN/SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN ORDER TO ELICIT GREATER SUPPORT FROM US. CUTLER. UNQUOTE VANCE.

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